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ABSTRACT

This report presents data on Hispanic Americans, one of the nation's largest racial minorities. Hispanics have had much lower high school completion rates and higher dropout rates than blacks and whites since the 1970s. Hispanic high school students are more likely to carry weapons and more likely to become pregnant than black and white students. Between 1970-99, the percentage of children in two-parent families decreased for all races, and the number of Hispanic children living in two-parent families decreased from 78 to 63 percent. Hispanic women have the highest nonmarital birth rate of all racial and ethnic groups. Hispanic youth are more likely than black or white youth to consider or attempt suicide. Hispanic children are less likely to have health insurance than black or white children. The percentage of all Hispanic women who receive early prenatal care has increased from 60.2 percent in 1980 to 74.3 percent in 1998. Hispanic children were more likely than other children to live in poverty in 1997. The percentage of Hispanic children at or below 100 percent of the poverty line declined between 1996-99, though they (and black children) are twice as likely as white children to live in poverty. (SM)

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Child TRENDS

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Trends Among Hispanic Children, Youth and Families

Preliminary figures from the Census Bureau indicate that Hispanics now rival African Americans as the nation's largest racial minority. This rapid growth occurred faster than demographers had predicted.

Data on Hispanic children, youth and families show that in many areas such as teen suicide, nonmarital births and health insurance, Hispanics fare worse than blacks and whites. On other measures, however, Hispanics have fared better than other groups. For example, Hispanic mothers have the lowest percentage of low-birthweight babies and are least likely to smoke during their pregnancies.

Child Trends has summarized key data on Hispanics:

Editors Note: Unless otherwise noted, "white" refers to non-Hispanic whites and "black" refers to non-Hispanic blacks. Hispanics can be of any race.

Education and Workforce Preparation

- Hispanics have had much lower high school completion rates than blacks and whites since the early 1970s. The rate for Hispanics (age 18 to 24) in 1998 was 63 percent, compared with 81 percent for blacks and 90 percent for whites. This suggests that many Hispanic youth and young adults will be less prepared than other 18- to 24-year-olds to enter or progress in the labor force.[1]

- In 1998, Hispanics had a higher dropout rate (9 percent) than whites (4 percent) or blacks (5 percent). Hispanics have had higher dropout rates than whites and blacks since the mid-1970s.[2]

- Hispanic youth, along with black youth, are more likely than white youth to not work or attend school. In 1999, 14 percent of Hispanic youth (compared to 13 percent of black youth and only 6 percent of white youth) were neither employed nor in school.[3]

Adolescent Risk-Taking

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- In 1999, Hispanic high school students were more likely than either black or white students to report having carried a weapon (19 percent, 17 percent and 16 percent respectively).[4]

- Hispanic students report the lowest rate of condom use during last sexual intercourse for the years 1991-1997. However, in 1999, 55 percent of both Hispanic and white students reported condom use during last sex. [5]

- In 1996, Hispanic teenagers (ages 15 to 19) were more likely than black and white teenagers to become pregnant. (The rates were 177.8 for Hispanics and 157.1 per 1,000 for blacks, and 68.1 for whites).[6]

- Hispanic teenagers also had a higher birth rate at 93.6 births per 1,000 15- to 19-year-old females. For black teenage girls and white teenage girls the rates were 88.2 and 35.2 respectively.

- Births to Hispanic (as well as black) teens are more likely to be repeat births than births to white teens. In 1998, 24 percent of births to Hispanic teens (as compared to 27 percent of births to black teens and 18 percent of births to non-Hispanic white teens) were second- or higher-order births.[7]

- The percentage of white and black teens who were sexually experienced declined between 1988 and 1995, while the percentage of Hispanic teens who are sexually experienced increased during the same period. In 1995, white teens were the least likely to be sexually expericened (50 percent), followed by Hispanic teens (55 percent) and black teens (60 percent).[8]

Family Structure

- Between 1970 and 1999, the percentage of children in two-parent families decreased for all races. The number of Hispanic children living in two-parent families decreased from 78 percent to 63 percent. The percentage of black children in two-parent families declined from 58 percent to 35 percent, and the number of white children in two-parent homes decreased from 90 percent to 74 percent.[9]

- Hispanic women have the highest nonmarital birth rate of all racial and ethnic groups. Data have only been collected for this subgroup since 1990, when the nonmarital birth rate was 89.6 births per 1,000 unmarried Hispanic women. The rate steadily increased, reaching its peak in 1994 (101.2 per 1,000) before declining back to the 1990 level in 1998 (90.1 per 1,000).[10]

- Hispanics had the highest percentage of nonmarital births to cohabiting couples in both the early 1980s (1980-1984) and the early 1990s (1990-1994), 48 percent and 53 percent respectively. [11]

- In 1998, white women had the lowest percentage of nonmarital births at 21.9 percent. Hispanics were next at 41.6 percent, followed by black women at 69.3 percent. For women 15 to 19, whites and Hispanics had a similar percentage of births to unmarried women, 71.9 percent and 72.9 percent, respectively. The percentage among black women was 95.8 percent. By ages 25 to 29, however, the percentage of births to unmarried Hispanic women was 31.2 percent compared to 13.6 percent for white women and 57.1 percent for black women.[12]

Health and Safety

- Hispanic youth are more likely than black or white youth to consider or attempt suicide. In 1999, 20 percent of Hispanic youth reported they had considered suicide (compared with 15 percent of black youth and 18 percent of white youth). Thirteen percent of Hispanic youth attempted suicide compared with 7 percent of white and black youth. [13]

- Hispanic children are less likely to have health insurance than either white or black children. In 1998, 70 percent of Hispanic children were covered by health insurance, compared with 86 percent of white and 80 percent of black children.[14]

- In 1998, Hispanics had the lowest percentage of births to mothers who smoked during their pregnancies. Four percent of Hispanic births were to mothers who smoked, compared with 10 percent for blacks and 16 percent for whites.

- In 1998, Hispanics 6 percent of Hispanic babies were low-birthweight, which was the lowest percentage among any group. The rate for whites was 7 percent and the rate for blacks was 13 percent.[15]

- In 1998, Hispanics had the lowest infant mortality rate (5.8 deaths per 1,000 live births), compared to 13.8 deaths per 1,000 live births for blacks and 6.0 deaths per 1,000 live births for whites.[16]

- The percentage of all Hispanic women who receive early prenatal care has increased from 60.2 percent in 1980 to 74.3 percent in 1998, compared to an increase from 62.4 percent to 73.3 percent for black women and from 79.2 to 87.9 for white women. *(Note: 1980 Percentages for black and white women here include women of Hispanic origin. After 1990, women of Hispanic origin are not included in the black and white percentages.)*[17]

- The percentage of Hispanic women receiving late or no prenatal care has decreased every year during the 1990s and at 6.3 percent in 1998 was lower than

the proportion for black women (7.0 percent), though still higher than the proportion for white women (2.4 percent). [18]

Poverty

- Hispanic children were more likely than other children to live in very poor neighborhoods in 1997. Sixty-one percent of poor Hispanic children lived in neighborhoods with a high concentration of poor residents (a neighborhood in which at least 40 percent of the residents are poor), compared to 56 percent of white children and 53 percent of black children.

- The percentage of Hispanic children at or below 100 percent of the poverty line declined between 1996 and 1999. Hispanic and black children, however are still twice as likely as white children to live in poverty. The percentage of Hispanic children at or below 100 percent of the poverty level declined between 1996 and 1998 (from 40 percent to 30 percent), compared to a decline from 40 percent to 33 percent for black children and a decline from 16 percent to 13 percent for white children. There was also a significant drop between 1996 and 1999 in the percentage of Hispanic children at or below 200 percent of the poverty line (72 percent to 64 percent) compared to a decline from 68 percent to 60 percent for black children and a decline from 37 percent to 33 percent for white children. [19]

Compiled by Stephanie Williams and edited by Jenice Robinson

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[1] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1996*, Tables 13 and A25; *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1997*, Table 4; *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1998*, Table 4.

[2] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, unpublished tabulations; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1996*, Table A19; *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1997*, Table B3; *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1998*, Table 1.

[3] Special tabulations of the Current Population Survey prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as published in *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2000*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Table ED5.

[4] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 1990-1991 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), In *Chronic Disease and Health Promotion Reporting, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Table 2, p. 68; Kann et al., Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 44*(SS-1), *45*(SS-4), *47*(SS-3), Table 4 in each.

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[9] Ventura, SJ and Bachrach, CA. 2000. Nonmarital childbearing in the United States, 1940-1999. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 48*(16). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

[10] Bumpass, L and Lu, H. 2000. Trends in cohabitation and implications for children's family context in the United States. *Population Studies, 54*, 29-41.

[11] Bumpass, L and Lu, H. 2000. Trends in cohabitation and implications for children's family context in the United States. *Population Studies, 54*, 29-41.

[12] Ventura, SJ and Bachrach, CA. 2000. Nonmarital childbearing in the United States, 1940-1999. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 48*(16). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

[13] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1990-1991 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, In *Chronic Disease and Health Promotion Reporting, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Table 1, p. 9; Table 1, p. 66; Kann et al. 1998 (August). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 1997. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 47*(SS-3); Kann et al. 1996 (September). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 1995. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 45*(SS-4).

[14] Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau, analyses from the March *Current Population Surveys*. Health Insurance Coverage: 1998, Table 7, available online at http://www.census.gov/hhes/hlthins/hlthin98/hi98t7.html, 10/4/99, and unpublished Table 1: Health Insurance Coverage Status—People by Age, Gender, and Race: 1997. Estimates for 1987-1998 as published in Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2000 Table ECON5.A.

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[19] Child Trends based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, 4: 86, Table 1: 106, Table 11: 133, Table 11, 158, Table 7, 175, Table 6; 181, Table 5; 185, Revised Table 6; 188, Table 8; 189, Table 9; 194, Table 2: and 201, Tables 2, A-1 and C-2.